

Symphony No. 7 of Serge Prokofiev (The French National Radio-TV Orchestra, Jean Martinon, conductor; WNCN)

Melody is not what Prokofiev is all about but rhythms are propulsive rhythms and machinery and machine energy in nineteenth-century forms and tonality. Gulping trombones and premiers danseurs and percussion instruments which establish symmetrical and then asymmetrical metronomic structures and that is the inner program of the world and nature for Mahler meant life and death and earth and universe. "Imagine the universe beginning to sing and resound. It is no longer human voices; it is planets and suns revolving." Munich and the offspring of Uranus and Gaea assembled and Thomas Mann, Richard Strauss, Arnold Schoenberg, Siegfried Wagner and Bruno Walter witnessed with three thousand others the formation of Mahler's Symphony No. 8 and that is the inner program of the world. Every time that the world is re-created the intelligent spectator is provided with a new conceptual form to contemplate and seeing the world as it has been re-created by the artist the spectator sees both the world and himself and is enlightened. One thousand people participated in the re-creation of the world in Munich in 1908 and that new world is divided into two and there is a before-state and an after-state and the former is what was and the latter is what will be. And such is the dialectic that is given a conceptual form by the composer and when Mahler took his place at the conductor's desk the entire audience rose to their feet in breathless silence and they did so because they knew that the world would be re-created before their ears and eyes and two mixed choruses and a boys' chorus and eight solo voices and a mammoth orchestra were under the direction of Mahler and the planets and the suns revolved and the inner program of the world was assigned a conceptual form. Symphonic form and except for songs and song cycles Mahler concentrated his creative energies on the symphony. His output contains no chamber music whatsoever, no music for solo instruments, no smaller choral works and no music for chamber orchestra. Immense symphonic structures and life and death and earth and universe.

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